

CHRISTIAN MESSENGER.

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VOL. II.

PHILADELPHIA, SATURDAY, JUNE 30, 1821.

NO. 48.

A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another, as I have loved you—JOHN xiii. 34.

From the Universalist Magazine.

TO REV. MOSES STUART.*

SIR,—Permit me only once more to address you. If you thought my communications were unworthy of an answer, you might have said so in a few words, and perhaps I might have been satisfied. At the time I wrote them, I considered there were things stated, which required some explanation from you, and have not yet seen any reason to change my opinion. I find a writer in the Universalist Magazine of May 12th, whose signature is R. C. is of the same mind. Though unknown to me, I feel obliged to him in urging you to reply to my communications. I hope what he has said, may induce you to do, what you must feel an incumbent duty, —*To reconcile your statements with the doctrine of endless misery.* If you can do this, and yet refuse to do it, be pleased to assign some reason for your conduct.

My object in writing you once more I shall now explain. Since I first wrote you, the little time I can spare, has been employed in examining this subject. I have directed my attention to the scriptures, and all my researches are conducted with the view, to ascertain what is truth. The plan I have laid down, is on an extensive scale, and find it will take much time and labour to finish it. It has cost me much time and labour already, and I increasingly find it will require much more, before all my researches are completed. I do not wish to anticipate the final result, but so far as my investigations have yet been conducted, I fear, that if I am an honest man, I must be a Universalist. Now, my dear sir, I wish you on reading this, to pause and ask yourself, "Am I doing right not to interpose to prevent this result? Can I thus suffer a man

* This is the last of a series of Letters addressed to Professor Stuart, a few of which were republished in the first volume of the Messenger, and if our room had been equal to their merit, we should like to have republished the whole. Ed.

to be led astray from the truth by any thing I have written, after such repeated and earnest solicitations for necessary explanations? Should this man perish, and others through his instrumentality, all originating from my book, can I wash my hands and say, I am clean, your blood be upon your own head?" The God of heaven be witness between us, that the statements on which I took the liberty to remark, were the means of shaking my faith, and yet you refuse to say any thing to re-establish it. I solemnly declare, that I have been sincere in all I have written, and unfeignedly have desired, that you would show me, if possible, how you reconcile your statements with the doctrine of eternal misery. I have urged you until I am ashamed, yet you assign no reason for your silence. What am I, sir, in such a case to do? Is there any other alternative left me, but either to shut my eyes, quiet my convictions, and sit down contented, an implicit believer in the doctrine of eternal misery; or, to gird myself to the task, candidly and patiently to examine this subject fully for myself. The last of these I prefer, and if life and health be granted me, shall give it a very full investigation. Should my inquiries end as I fear they must, you may perhaps have an opportunity of seeing, that I have neither hastily, nor carelessly made up my mind on this very important subject. The observations I have already by me, collected in my examination of the scriptures, are by far too voluminous for Magazine communications. I shall not trouble the world with another book, if I have not something to offer on this subject strong and conclusive. I feel a solemn responsibility for what I may write, knowing that it will outlive me, and may be doing much mischief in the world, when it is out of my power to prevent it. If you have got any thing to offer, I entreat you now to produce it. I am open to conviction. What is truth is my object, and to argument and evidence drawn from the

scriptures I shall pay attention, from whatever quarter they may come. To any other mode of settling this question, I shall be like the deaf adder. When once my investigations are finished, and I am fully satisfied that the bible teaches no such doctrine as endless misery, I shall neither be afraid nor ashamed to avow it, and if necessary, to defend it. My views may then possibly be submitted to you and the world at large for examination.

If any thing which I could say or do, would induce you to come forward to prevent me from imbibing error, most gladly would I perform it. If after this, you still refuse to comply with my reasonable request, all the world, yourself not excepted, ought to free me of blame. If any thing uncandid in my matter, or indecorous in my manner, has induced you to be silent, forgive me this wrong. Nothing could be further from the feelings of my heart towards you. Believe me I very highly esteem you, and am sorry to bid you adieu.

A Disappointed Inquirer after Truth.

From the same.

THE REV. JOSEPH P. FESSENDEN'S
SERMON.

On our 191st page,* we noticed this preacher's reasoning from the divine foreknowledge to prove Calvinistic election, and endeavoured to show that what he depends on for conclusive proof has not the least allusion or relation to his subject. We concluded with a promise to show that the passages of scripture which he has adduced to support his unmerciful doctrine, do no more relate to it than does the foreknowledge of the Deity.

One of the passages which he has quoted into his sermon, for the express purpose of limiting the goodness of our heavenly Father to a few individuals of

* See Messenger, page 181.

the human family, and excluding all the rest of mankind from the divine favour to all eternity, is the following; 1st. His text, 2 Thes. ii. 13, "But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning, chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the spirit and belief of the truth." Now to show that this passage has no power to limit the goodness of God to a few of mankind, we only need to ask whether the apostle meant that these Thessalonians were all who would ever be made partakers of the divine favour? Even Mr. Fessenden will answer, no. Then if others beside them can be made partakers of the same salvation, the next question is, how many more? Who will answer this question? We ask again, do these words intimate that in due time God will not do his will in saving all men and bringing them to the knowledge of the truth, as he had already these Thessalonians? No.—Then this text has not the least power to prove this awful, gloomy doctrine of God's limited goodness.

The next passage is Eph. i. 3, 4, 5, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy, and without blame before him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will."

The reader will be surprized to observe the infatuations of tradition, which are made visible by an attempt to limit the divine favour by the authority of these words. It would seem that merely because our preacher found the words *chosen* and *predestinated* in the text, he was sure their meaning must be according to Calvinistic election! But if we carefully inquire who the apostle spake of as this *chosen* and *predestinated*? the answer is, himself and other apostles. If it be asked whether the apostle did not mean to comprehend his brethren, the believing Ephesians? We answer, he did not. This we prove by the following context, particularly the 12th and 13th verses, which read thus; "That *we* should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ."—

Here it is evident that the apostle ceased speaking of himself and his brethren in the ministry, and then adds; "In whom *ye* also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with the holy spirit of promise." Now if the apostle had included the Ephesian believers in the first place, would he have brought them in afterward with an *also*, and by changing his speech from the first to the second person? What follows? Answer, it follows, that when the apostle said; "According as he hath chosen *us*, having predestinated *us*," he was not speaking of all those, who were, even in his day, partakers of the grace and salvation of the gospel; much less was he speaking of all, who would finally be gathered into Christ, to be one with him. And this is further evident by the grand sequel of his argument which seems to result in the 8th, 9th, and 10th verses as follows; "Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure, which he hath purposed in himself: that in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one, all things, in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, even in him." How almost unaccountable is it, that a man of sense and learning, should blunder about in this chapter, like one blindfolded, and think he sees clearly the limitarian doctrine of Calvinistic election!

In the passage which our preacher quoted, the apostle truly speaks of God's having chosen and predestinated the apostles, as those who first trusted in Christ, but unto what were they predestinated? This question is answered in the 5th verse, thus; "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will." But does he intimate that their predestination and adoption excluded any of the human family from the same favour? No, surely he does not; but proceeds on, as above shown, until he gathers together in Christ all things which are in heaven and which are on earth. At the conclusion of his remarks on this passage in the 1st of Ephesians, Mr. Fessenden asks the fol-

lowing question; "Is it possible, my hearers, for language more clearly or fully to convey any truth to our minds than does this portion of scripture, the doctrine of election?" We answer this question as follows; No language could more clearly set forth the doctrine of God's electing some to the work of the ministry for the benefit of others than this and many other passages; nor can any language more clearly or fully refute the doctrine of election according to Calvin; which doctrine supposes that the elect only are the subjects of divine favour.

The preacher has quoted some other passages, which we have had occasion heretofore to explain, we shall therefore dismiss this subject; but will as soon as convenient, show our readers how the preacher manages the objections which are brought against his doctrine.

Christian Messenger.

Philadelphia, Saturday, June 30, 1821.

"CHRISTIAN REPOSITORY."—Vol. II
No. 1. 1821.

We have regretted that a work acknowledging our general sentiment, and engaged in its support, should contain any thing exceptionable; and we are now happy to state that this work, in our opinion, has been much improved since its commencement. So far as the person of the editor has been concerned, (whom, as we very much respect, we never meant to implicate,) we are perfectly satisfied; but so far as any point of doctrine is concerned, we must be convinced of error before we can recind from the ground we have taken. We regret also that our remarks of April 21, page 151 of the Messenger, "were not received in time for Hiram to answer;"* but perhaps this is owing to the number's coming out one month sooner than was anticipated. We should have thought however, that all the month of May would have been sufficient: but as we are informed that we "may," so we shall "expect to hear from" Hiram, or some one else in their "next."

* Our remarks were published the 21st of April, and forwarded immediately; and we have received this notice the 21st of June, two months afterwards.

In referring to our '*pledge*,' as we have promised 'if life and health be spared,' the Editor of the Repository observes, "But here it seems they must be lame, tho' we meet them on their own plan. For if we take the affirmative, on the question of future punishment, they must the negative." What then? Does this occasion any lameness? If so, it is a lameness that is not as yet felt.—Now, when they shall have proved the affirmative of the question, what have we pledged ourselves to do? Why, simply, to "acknowledge the doctrine true!" *These are our words*; and will this be so difficult a task that we "must be lame" in doing it? What have we promised to do if they should not be able to prove the affirmative of the question? Nothing more than to "show wherein they have failed in giving it support;" and will this occasion any lameness on our part? Certainly not, unless they should find something in the scriptures that necessarily proves such a doctrine. We have not promised, neither shall we undertake to prove a negative, but what we have promised, we apprehend no difficulty in fulfilling.

FOR THE CHRISTIAN MESSENGER.
THE PRESBYTERIAN MAGAZINE.
(Review of No. 5, Concluded.)

It is now high time that this reformation be commenced. And, to make use of the writer's words whose essay has elicited these remarks,

"If those of influence would thus show a desire to have the doctrines of the gospel explained and enforced, we have no doubt but that this method of instruction would become, in our churches, fashionable; and that much valuable information would, in consequence, by judicious divines, be communicated to their hearers—which they have no opportunity of doing at present, on account of the sermonizing system that is pursued.

"Were this practice of *lecturing* then restored, it might, under Providence, by diffusing among the people the pure doctrines of undiluted truth, be the means of preventing, in a great measure, the dissemination of noxious errors. For, by lecturing, both preachers and people would naturally become better acquainted with the contents of the sacred volume, and would, in consequence, be less apt, than they now are, to embrace those specious human inventions which many theological system-makers have substituted for the more simple and, perhaps to some, less attractive doctrines of Christianity. For we find that wherever the true doctrines of the Bible are well understood and taught, there, the progress of theological error is slow. But, on the contrary, where the Bible is little read

and little studied, there we find that errors and corruptions grow rapidly and take deep and permanent root. It was during the concealment of the sacred volume, that Roman Catholic errors and superstitions spread so widely and took such a firm hold of the hearts and consciences of men. What has happened may yet happen—and should the Bible be voluntarily relinquished by Protestant Christians, the same effect may be now experienced in regard to the propagation of error, which was felt by mankind when the perusal of the Bible was denied to them by a crafty and corrupt priesthood."

In a note to this essay, the writer observes,

"By *judicious lecturing* we mean, not that the clergyman, who *lectures*, should endeavour to obtain among his hearers the name of *learned*, by continually finding fault with our English translation of the scriptures; but should simply aim, without shaking their confidence in their English Bibles, to open up to the view of his people the treasures of divine wisdom which the scriptures contain."

We have often regretted the great fondness which our opponents have for dealing out their opinions in such general assertions as the above; which, however well they may be calculated to alarm the prejudices, must fail of communicating to the understandings of their readers any degree of information on the subject to which they relate. We could wish that they always would condescend to state candidly and clearly the arguments upon which their opinions are founded, that their readers may be enabled to judge for themselves with respect to their validity.

And from whence, we would ask, arises all this fear which exists among orthodox christians, of confessing candidly, and to all, that there are errors— manifold errors in the commonly received English version of the scriptures, and of referring to the original for their correction? That there are errors, is fully proved by the labours of Bishops Newcome and Lowth; Drs. Geddes, Symonds, M^r Knight and Campbell, and Messrs. Wakefield, Schuyliens, and a host of others, all of whom have, in consequence, attempted a more correct translation of the whole, or of select portions of the scriptures.

Is it then the *testimony* itself that we are bound to preserve pure, without alteration, addition or diminution—or, is it only the form in which that testimony appears in the version which we owe to the labours of the translators of king James? In other words, is it the pure doctrines of Christ, or the language only into which they are trans-

lated, however imperfectly it may convey their spirit, that demands our veneration? Most assuredly it is the former—and, it is the bounden duty of all who are competent for the task, to present them to the illiterate and to the poor of the present day, in terms as nearly corresponding as possible to the spirit of those in which they were first communicated to mankind.

The majority of Christians must know that the divine revelation did not proceed from the mouths of the Prophets, of Christ and of his disciples, in the language in which it appears in our version, but in others differing from it materially in their very genius. The better informed of them, must also know, that upwards of two centuries have elapsed since the present version was executed, and that since that time we have become better prepared for rendering the spirit of the original into the vulgar tongue, from the fact that the oriental dialects have been more carefully studied, and biblical criticism carried to a degree of perfection unknown in the sixteenth century. Many Hebrew and Samaritan MSS. have also since then been collated, and we introduced to a more intimate acquaintance with the history, manners, and customs of the people among whom most of the events recorded in the scriptures took place—among whom the prophets lived—and HE in whom they were fulfilled performed his miracles, by the researches of enlightened travellers.

At all times, however, there have been found religionists, ready to fly into the face of every one who dared to make the smallest innovation, even in the trappings of religion; we learn from St. Augustine, that the change of a single word, made by St. Jerome, in the old italic version of *Jonah*, scandalized a whole diocese; and we have read of a very devout and worthy gentleman, who deemed it little less than heresy, to say, "Our father *who* art in heaven," for, "Our father *which* art in heaven."

To those who art not aware of the imperfections of our present translation, and to those who wish to be convinced of the futility of apprehending any danger from acknowledging these imperfections, and remedying them by a more correct translation from the original, we earnestly recommend a careful pe-

rusal of the work of Dr. John Symonds, "on the expediency of revising the present English version of the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles," of Bishop Newcome's "Historical View of the English Biblical translations," of the Rev. Dr. George Campbell's Preface to his Translation of the Four Gospels, and to the Appendix to the Rev. Dr. Geddes' Prospectus to a new translation of the Bible; where the subject is amply discussed, in a manner at once honourable to the heads, as well as to the hearts of these distinguished authors.

The most common objections to acknowledging that there exists errors in our *English bible*, and of remedying them by a reference to the original, are, that it will diminish the confidence of many in those scriptures which from their youths they have been taught to consider as perfect,—and, that it will *shake the faith of thousands!* But, if our *English bible*, as it is admitted by a host of writers, eminent for their learning and their piety, and if you please, their orthodoxy, is not a *perfect* version of the original, why fear to destroy the confidence of every one, in what, if they be not in themselves dangerous errors, are at least blots upon what should be the fair page of revelation? Instead of abstaining from it, I consider it the duty of every one who knows this to be a fact, to lend his aid to *destroy* this confidence.—It can do no harm to the genuine word of God, by presenting it to the English christian, as it respects the language, in a form more pure and more correct, than that in which they have been accustomed to contemplate it. On the contrary, I am almost confident it would have the effect of destroying any influence which the specious arguments of the deist and the atheist might otherwise have on some minds.—Many of these arguments are founded on absurdities which they impute, with apparent plausibility, to the sacred writings. Most of these apparent difficulties are superficial ones, arising from an ignorance of the original languages,—and would vanish from the text by more judicious renderings.

With respect to the danger of shaking the faith of thousands—we reply, that a knowledge of the errors of our common translation, may indeed tend to shake the faith of thousands in many of those dogmas which they have here-

tofore received as the word of God, but which "have no part therein,"—but, it is hard to conceive how the faith of thousands in the truths of the religion of our heavenly father, can be shaken by removing stumbling blocks instead of retaining them.

"Were a version of the Bible executed in a manner suitable to the magnitude of the undertaking, such a measure would have a direct tendency to *establish the faith of thousands*, to open their understandings, to warm their hearts, to enliven their devotions, and to delight their imaginations. Absurd belief and corrupt practice arise from an ignorance or perversion of the scriptures; and not from the best human inducements and assistances to search and understand them. It is the nature of truth, and especially of divine truth, to captivate those who contemplate it, in proportion as the veil is withdrawn, and its genuine features appear."

From the Universalist Magazine.

BLASPHEMY.

Middletown, Conn. March 1, 1821.

BROTHER BALLOU,—I send you the copy of a letter written by A. NETTLETON of Killingworth, in this county, who I need not mention is a warm Calvinist preacher; but as he has assumed the name of our Saviour, it would seem that the letter ought to correspond with the Saviour's declarations to man. I do not recollect any passage of scripture containing the expression that "my spirit shall not always strive with man," but the one in Genesis vi. 3, in which verse follows the clearest proof that God there alludes to the length of man's temporal life only, and not to the operations of his holy spirit, as this ignorant preacher would seem to represent.—The other quotation from Proverbs is equally inapplicable. It would seem enough for this blasphemous preacher to promulgate his erroneous sentiments, without being guilty of forgery; but to give force to his wicked and erroneous sentiments, he must add the name of the Saviour of men.

The copy is at your disposal to publish or not, as you deem proper. I give it as I received it. I have seen sundry persons of character, who saw the origi-

nal in the hand writing of Mr. Nettleton.

I am, respectfully and affectionately,
Your obedient servant,

J. STOW.

The following letter was written by Rev. Asahel Nettleton, to an assembly collected at the Inn, in South Britain Society, for the purpose of a social Ball.

(COPY.)

Southbury, March 13, 1818.

DEAR YOUTH,—I have come into your assembly this evening on an important errand; I have heard every word you have spoken, and seen every thought in your heart. I have come to inform you that my spirit shall not always strive with you. Because I have called and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand and no man regarded, but ye have set at naught all my counsel and would none of my reproof, I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh—when your fear cometh as a desolation and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind, when distress and anguish cometh upon you, then shall they call upon me but I will not answer. They shall seek me early but they shall not find me.

I am, dear youth, your much grieved friend,
JESUS CHRIST.

N. B. If the youth will agree to turn their meeting into a religious conference this evening, please to send back word and I will come and see you, if not, I will go into my closet, and with the help of God will pray for your souls while you dance. ASAHEL NETTLETON.

We publish the foregoing, not only to give our present readers to know the presumptuous wickedness to which the opposers of the truth are willing to descend, but that generations yet to come may learn the perverseness and blasphemy of the orthodoxy of the present day. Let us ask, where in all the New Testament, do we read of the Saviour's treating young people as this fanatic represents in his letter? Some time past, we received a letter dated *Infernal Pit*, and signed NICK LUCIFER; a few days since we received one, purporting to come from a great distance, signed PRINCE IMMANUEL; this letter was too indecent for publication. We now have at our disposal one signed JESUS CHRIST, written in the same wicked and perverse spirit. Readers, you will be shocked at the profanity of this forgery; but speaking lies in the name of the Lord is no new practice with the deceivers of mankind. Let us say; "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do."

NOTICE.—A meeting of the Proprietors of the Christian Messenger will be held on Tuesday evening next, at eight o'clock, at the Commissioners' Hall, north Third street. June 30.